

Assemblyman
PAUL KORETZ
 Forty-second Assembly District

proudly representing the communities of West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, Century City, Westwood, Bel Air, Brentwood, West Los Angeles, Hollywood, Hancock Park, Universal City, Studio City, and Sherman Oaks



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Koretz Calls for Condoms in Prisons

AB 1677 Would Permit Health Agencies to Distribute Condoms

(Sacramento) – Assemblyman Paul Koretz (D-West Hollywood) today announced the introduction of state legislation that would permit non-profit and public health care agencies to distribute condoms in state prisons.

“The HIV infection rate in our state correctional facilities is many times higher than in the general population. Everyone knows that sex happens in prison, and the correctional system seems unable to prevent it. Ignoring that fact by not distributing condoms results in unnecessary inmate infections and fuels HIV transmission outside of prison, particularly in our minority communities,” said Assemblyman Koretz.

California prisons house over 160,000 individuals who are at high risk of contracting HIV. The rate of HIV infection in California’s prison system in 1994 was estimated to be 2.5 percent. That is eight times higher than in the general population of Los Angeles County which had a rate of 0.32 percent in 2000. HIV is transmitted in prison by three primary routes: unprotected sex between inmates, injection drug use, and tattooing. In 2003 the average length of stay in California prisons was 25.1 months, with many HIV infections going undetected until long after release.

“Public health agencies could find no more effective place to distribute condoms than in prisons. Not doing so is taking a huge toll in additional infections and in health care costs to state programs,” added Koretz.

The Correctional HIV Consortium estimates that the health care cost for an HIV positive inmate is \$80,396 per year. Former inmates who seroconverted in prison often end up on MediCal or in the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP). In the 2002-03 fiscal year, the average annual treatment cost for an HIV infected MediCal client was \$22,964. The average annual cost for a client in ADAP was \$7,966 in the 2003-04 fiscal year.

Condoms are available in prisons in Vermont and Mississippi, as well as in Canada, most of the European Union, and parts of Latin America. Among jail systems, New York City, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. distribute condoms. Here in California, condoms are distributed in both the San Francisco and Los Angeles County jails. Julie Falk is the Executive Director of Correct Help, a non-profit agency distributing condom in the Los Angeles County Jail.

“Since 2001, we have distributed over 10,000 condoms in the LA County Jail without incident. The logistical issues raised by correctional officials can be addressed with no negative impact to security or safety for inmates or correctional staff,” commented Falk.

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